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The Effect of the Use of Graphic Organizers on Eighth Graders' Writing of Essays

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The Effect of the Use of Graphic Organizers
On Eighth Graders' Writing of Essays

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the
Department of Education and Human Development
State University of New York College at Brockport
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science in Education

by

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Abstract

This study was designed to analyze the effect of the use of graphic organizers on eighth graders' writing of essays and the students' feelings about using those graphic organizers.

Eighty-eight eighth grade students from a diverse rural school district in New York participated in this study. This study occurred for a duration of 3.5 months. Two essays were used as a baseline; four essays were written in which the graphic organizers were required. For the two remaining essays, students were given the choice of using the graphic organizers or not using them.

All essays were graded according to a rubric. The grades of the essays were charted so that the teacher could see the results in a sequential manner. In addition to determining if graphic organizers improved students' essays, the chart also kept track of how many students chose to use the graphic organizers when not required to do so. Surveys and interviews were also used.

Results showed that there was very little significant progress with students who used the graphic organizers. Fourteen percent of students improved their essay writing while using graphic organizers; eighty-six percent of students did not show any progress; nine students did not complete the graphic organizers even when required to do so. Because of this, those nine students were not included in these particular results.

Out of the six selected students, only one student seemed to improve his essay writing when using the graphic organizers. The scores of the other five students either remained fairly constant or were too inconsistent (scores varied too much) to determine if graphic organizers played a significant role.

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Chapter I

Statement of Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of the use of graphic organizers on eighth graders' writing of essays and to explore students' attitudes toward those graphic organizers.

Introduction

I am an eighth grade English teacher. I used to teach elementary children, so focusing on just the subject of English was somewhat new to me. I was a first year teacher and looking for the best method for teaching writing, especially the writing of essays.

Writing, specifically writing essays, is an essential skill that students need to learn and become proficient at. Focusing on the prewriting stage, to help with organization, is one of the recommended ways to help students form better essays. After researching and talking with other professional educators, it seemed that graphic organizers were an effective prewriting tool for writing essays. Because of this, I decided to research the use of graphic organizers and how they were helpful or not helpful to my own students. Related to this, I decided to focus on my students' feelings toward using these graphic organizers.

Need for the Study

Writing is becoming a major issue in today's schools, especially with the new emphasis on the NYS English Language Arts exams and Regents exams. Research completed by Adams (cited in Daniels, 1999) confirms that "writing is an important lifelong communication skill" (p.1). Writing is required for many types of employment in society today. Employers expect their employees to be fluent and possess clear writing and communication skills. Adams also states that there is a general lack of writing ability today among students (cited in Daniels, 1999). One of the problems is that teachers tend to concentrate on the final product of writing, instead of the students' process. Because of this, teachers and students don't understand how successful writers form their final product. They only see the final outcome (Schaeffer, cited in Daniels, 1999).

Today, teachers are focusing more on the entire writing process, particularly the prewriting stage. Because writing is so important in today's society, teachers are looking for better ways for students to prepare their writing. A particular emphasis for middle school students is the essay. Although many students struggle with writing an essay, essay tests will be around for a long time. Essays allow students to think, organize, compose, and edit, rather than just fill in blanks or bubbles or answer multiple choice questions. This encourages students to be active learners, rather than passive (White, 1994). Essays usually include the five basic sections: the introduction (including the thesis statement), the three supporting paragraphs defending the statement (with each paragraph containing a topic sentence), and the conclusion (wrapping up what was just written). Nunnally (1991) agrees that "the five-paragraph theme is a national phenomenon. Students from all over are proficient in the form" (p.69).

Because students tend to have such difficulty writing essays, teachers have begun implementing graphic organizers to assist them during their planning or prewriting stage. Although previous research suggests that graphic organizers improve reading comprehension among students, there is little research on the effectiveness of graphic organizers during prewriting.

Many researchers claim the usefulness and advantages of graphic organizers (Beers & Samuels, 1998; Atwell, 1987; White, 1994; Graham, Macarthur, & Schwartz, 1992; De La Paz, 1997; Schwiebert, 1996; Irwin-DeVitis & Pease, 1995; Wong, Butler, Ficzero, & Kuperis, 1996; Moor, 1993; Routman, 1991; Cassidy, 1991; Sorenson, 1991; Robinson & Kiewra, 1995; Egan, 1999; Novak & Gowan, 1984; Horton, Lovitt, & Bergerud, 1990), but not much research has been done involving middle school students. So although graphic organizers are seen as an interesting prewriting method, more studies need to be done at the middle school level. When teaching how to write essays, teachers need to know the usefulness and quality of graphic organizers so as to determine whether or not they should introduce them to students.

Definitions

Graphic organizers: Visual representations of concepts that assist students in learning, remembering, organizing, and relating important information. Other names for graphic organizers include: webs, clusters, cognitive mapping, semantic maps, visual organizers, Venn diagrams, hierarchical diagrams, cyclical diagrams, sequence diagrams, matrixes, story maps, structured overviews, concept branching, networking, idea mapping, tree diagrams, thematic illustrations, graphic maps, and episodic maps.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Middle School Students

According to Beers and Samuels (1998), “no one really understands middle school students-not teachers or administrators, not parents or psychologists; actually, not even middle schoolers themselves” (p.3). There is no other group quite as intriguing, stimulating, and demanding. Learning for middle school students must be meaningful and purposeful so they can relate the new information to their own lives. Because middle schoolers are still developing both emotionally and physically, teachers need to make their lessons more captivating and interesting in order to motivate them (Beers and Samuels, 1998).

When it comes to the topics of reading and writing, these middle school students seem to be overlooked. Much of the research and literature focuses on elementary school students. But as students get older, shouldn't reading and writing be even more of an issue as they get closer to reaching the adult world?

Writing

Teachers need to look at the larger picture of writing in order to improve students' composing. To do this, they must focus on the entire writing process. This writing process includes the five basic steps of prewriting, drafting, editing/revising, final copy, and publishing/sharing (Daniels, 1999; “Handbook of the writing,” 1996; “General procedure for,” 1999; Menassa, 1998). By viewing students during all of these stages,

the teacher can assist students and give suggestions and responses during writing, instead of after the product is completed. During the writing process, students need regular intervals of time to complete the stages. They must brainstorm, compose, conference with the teacher and peers, and even change topics if needed. Writers shouldn't always have a topic given to them and should learn mechanics in context. Writing is a process and not just a product; it needs to be treated as such (Atwell, 1987).

The writer is like an architect. An architect does not directly build a building for a construction company, but produces a plan by which a construction company builds a building. A writer does not directly develop understanding for a reader; rather, a writer produces a text by which a reader develops understanding.

Cunningham, Cunningham, & Arthur, 1981, p.39

Obviously, writing is an important skill that everyone needs to possess. It's a process that must be practiced, nurtured, and developed into a final product with the utmost quality. Writing is a skill that is used throughout school, as well as for the remainder of a person's adult life. Because of the importance of quality writing, students must learn how to organize and sufficiently develop their writing skills by the time they graduate high school.

Graphic Organizers

Although there are many different methods available to teach writing, graphic organizers are becoming a popular, widely used method at all grade levels. Graphic organizers can be used at various stages of the writing process, but the main use tends to be in the prewriting stage. Prewriting should occupy a large portion of classroom writing time. Preparation for writing still isn't given the attention that it deserves (Moor and

Caldwell, 1993). Planning, or prewriting, is a significant aspect of the writing process because it allows students to brainstorm, think critically, gather their ideas, and put their thoughts into some kind of organized fashion (Moor and Caldwell, 1993; De La Paz, 1997; Routman, 1991; White, 1994).

In a study by De La Paz, it was observed that a learning and writing disabled student, Jeffrey, only spent one minute on prewriting and eleven minutes on writing an essay. This is like most other average and above average achieving students. For some reason, prewriting hasn't been emphasized until recently (1997).

Prewriting, especially in the form of graphic organizers, allows students freedom while also giving them the limitations and organization that they need (White, 1994).

Freedom is an equivocal virtue. We want freedom to travel, but not freedom from train and airline schedules that make freedom possible, as Robert Frost suggested when he, in conversation, said that writing poetry without rhyme is like playing tennis without a net.

White, 1994, p.57

Teachers can help students learn the best way to organize their essays by introducing and explaining a variety of options, including outlining, notetaking, and graphic organizers (Beers & Samuels, 1998; Graham, Macarthur, Schwartz, & Page-Voth, 1992; White, 1994). Schwiebert (1996) says that English rules and conventions make it hard for students to think. They focus so much on the correct mechanics and format that they think less about the content. They certainly don't enjoy writing. This is another reason why graphic organizers are a useful tool for students. Using them does not require correct grammar and usage; they also provide a format. They allow students to write down their ideas as they come into their minds (Schwiebert, 1996).

Graphic organizers emphasize the main ideas in brief format, which is helpful when it comes time to write essays. One sixth grader, Lindsay, stated that graphic organizers are short and get right to the point, without having a lot of extra words that aren't needed (Irwin-DeVitis & Pease, 1995). Brown (cited in Daniels, 1999) encourages the use of graphic organizers because the visual image allows students to see the connections among concepts. They not only make writing a little more interesting, but give students a method for organizing information. This is especially important because many middle school students need a great deal of assistance in organization skills. Research confirms that when students are able to form images of information or ideas, their understanding and retention are increased (Irwin-DeVitis & Pease, 1995). Graphic organizers have shown to be effective with a variety of students: those who are gifted (Cassidy, 1991), those with special needs, and students who struggle especially with writing (Sorenson, 1991). In a study completed by Robinson and Kiewra, students who used graphic organizers were more successful in writing integrated essays than those who only used outlines or text alone (1995). Rafferty and Fleschner (cited in Irwin-DeVitis & Pease, 1995) completed a study in which concept maps had positive results. The maps assessed the learning, decreased students' anxiety, and were much easier to prepare than other assignments. Although they are easier to assess, graphic organizers should not replace essays. They should be combined with some form of writing and should only be used as a way to organize ideas beforehand ("6 Ways to make," 1995; Irwin-DeVitis & Pease, 1995).

Although research supports the effectiveness of graphic organizers when teachers make them, it is even more advantageous when students develop their own (Irwin-

DeVitis & Pease, 1995). There are many reasons to use graphic organizers. They can be used in all subject areas (“6 Ways to make,” 1995; Irwin-DeVitis & Pease, 1995), combined with individual or group instruction, changed to fit individual or group needs and abilities, allow students to see and relate a variety of concepts visually, measure depth of learning, and promote flexibility (Irwin-DeVitis & Pease, 1995).

Graphic organizers are a preferred method in schools today for many reasons. They allow students to focus on the main idea of a topic and then branch out into subtopics and details. This allows the teacher to actually see the students’ understanding of concepts and relationships. Graphic organizers are highly personalized, and encourage individuality and creativity because every student develops them in different ways (Bromley, Irwin-DeVitis, & Modlo, 1995). They force students to interact with the material (Novak & Gowan, 1984). They do more than just “recall” facts; they encourage logical thinking and self-evaluation (Irwin-DeVitis & Pease, 1995; Freeman, 2000). Graphic organizers are advantageous to teachers as well. According to Moore and Readence(1984), teachers who use them feel more control over the learning activity, are better organized, and more confident.

Although graphic organizers are a powerful strategy that can be used for authentic assessment in our middle schools (Irwin-DeVitis & Pease, 1995), they need to be well planned to obtain the greatest results (Egan, 1999; “6 Ways to make,” 1995). Teachers must also be sure to incorporate only those graphic organizers that can be easily developed by amateurs (Robinson, 1998). Before implementing graphic organizers, students must first be taught the purpose and how to use them. The teacher must give clear directions and clear criteria for grading before students complete the graphic

organizers and writing assignment. Finally, for the best results, students should be allowed to explain and discuss their graphic organizers in order to better understand them and see the connections (Irwin-DeVitis & Pease, 1995).

Chapter III

Design

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of the use of graphic organizers on eighth graders' writing of essays and to explore students' attitudes toward those graphic organizers.

Research Question

What is the effect of the use of graphic organizers on eighth graders' writing of essays?

What are eighth graders' attitudes toward the use of graphic organizers?

When given the opportunity to choose their own prewriting method, will eighth graders choose to use graphic organizers?

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects of this study included 88 eighth grade students from a rural and diverse junior-senior high school. These students were divided into five English classes daily. There was a particular emphasis on six students. These six subjects consisted of three females and three males in my eighth grade classes. Based on my assessment of their work during the semester, two students seemed to possess high writing ability, two seemed to be average writers, and two seemed to have lower writing abilities. None of

these students were repeating eighth grade. They were taking an eighth grade English class daily for forty minutes. There was only one English teacher per grade level, so all the students had me as their English teacher.

I was a first-year teacher, though I did possess experience at the middle school level. This included a long-term English teaching position and substitute teaching for two years. There was no set curriculum to follow. I chose what I wished to teach, as long as it related to the English language arts standards.

Materials

There were numerous essay writing assignments given, some based on The Outsiders novel by S.E. Hinton, while others were from the “Sharpen Up!” books used for the English Language Arts exam preparation. These books included different writing prompts based upon certain articles. These articles varied from fables to editorials to fiction to nonfiction. Still other assignments were given from a variety of sources that included writing prompts.

Besides writing assignments, there was also a diverse selection of graphic organizers that were introduced during the prewriting stage of essay writing.

Procedures

Although all students in the eighth grade English classes received the essay assignments, my focus of study was on six selected students. Based on previous writing assessments, I chose these six particular students because I desired two lower-level

writers, two average-level writers, and two higher-level writers. The study occurred over a period of 3.5 months.

First, I showed and explained to all students the typical five-paragraph essay. Two baseline essays were written by students, prior to introducing the graphic organizers. This allowed a starting point so I could better see students' progress as they wrote essays with and without graphic organizers.

After the baseline essays, students were introduced first to the "Graphic Organizer for 5-paragraph Essay" (See Appendix A). I required students to use this specific graphic organizer for four essays. For the remaining two essays, students had a choice if they wished to use this graphic organizer or not.

Two other graphic organizers that were incorporated were "Comparing and Contrasting" and "Major Character Traits" (See Appendix A). Students were required to use these graphic organizers only once, and then had a choice if they would like to implement them.

I told students when it was mandated or was not mandated for them to use the graphic organizers for the prewriting stage of their essays. This way, I better determined if graphic organizers improved students' essays, as well as discovered which students, if any, preferred using the graphic organizers during prewriting.

The six chosen students completed the same graphic organizers and essays that the other students were assigned. All students filled out a survey (See Appendix B), after using the graphic organizers, to help me evaluate students' attitudes toward them. The six students also completed a more detailed survey about their experiences with graphic organizers (See Appendix C). To determine the six students' attitudes toward writing, a

“Writing Attitude Survey” was distributed to them at the beginning of the study (See Appendix D).

Analysis of Data

I analyzed the data in several ways. I used observation, anecdotal notes, and surveys to establish students’ attitudes and opinions toward graphic organizers. Interviews were conducted with the six selected students. These methods also allowed me to establish how many students actually chose to use graphic organizers when given the opportunity, without being required, as well as determined which types of graphic organizers they selected.

The essays were graded according to a rubric, which ranged from level one through level six (See Appendix E). These levels also included a percentage grade range so that I could compute what the students’ grades were out of one hundred points. When graphic organizers were mandatory, students were given full credit if the graphic organizers were complete with adequate information, half credit if they included only some information, and zero credit if they were not done. Graphic organizers were not graded when students had the option to use them.

Chapter IV

Results of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of the use of graphic organizers on eighth graders' writing of essays and to explore students' attitudes toward those graphic organizers.

Prewriting

Surveys and interviews were administered and anecdotal records taken throughout the study in order to obtain the most reliable results. Prewriting was a focus, which was addressed through these methods. Most students in this study spent only five to fifteen minutes on their prewriting. Some students didn't spend any time on prewriting.

Out of the six focal students, three of them usually didn't prewrite. One student spent only about 5 minutes on prewriting. The two remaining students, who were the higher level writers, spent longer periods of time on prewriting. One student spent a half hour on prewriting, while the other one claimed to use an entire hour. However, this was not evident in classroom observations.

When asked what kind of prewriting methods students had used, other than the graphic organizers used in this English class, students had similar responses. The most common types of prewriting used were notes and outlines. Forty-two of the eighty-eight students used notes; fifty-two of the eighty-eight students used outlines. Other methods

mentioned were webs, T-charts, pictures for stories, brainstorming, lists, and a rough draft. Seven students claimed that they had never used prewriting methods.

Progress of students

To determine how much progress students made or did not make, two baseline essays for each student were graded according to the rubric. These essays were written before the graphic organizers were introduced. Four more essays were then written for which the graphic organizers were required. Two final essays were assigned in which students were given the choice of implementing the graphic organizers or not. All of these results were charted so the researcher could better see students' progress.

Although there were 88 total students involved in this study, 9 of them chose not to always use the graphic organizers even when required to do so. Because of this, these nine students were not included in the results involving the progress made when using graphic organizers.

The percentage of students who showed improvement in their essay scores, according to the rubric, was 14%. 86% of students demonstrated no noted progress with the use of graphic organizers. These particular students' scores were either consistent with their baseline essay scores or varied too much to show progress specifically from the use of graphic organizers.

Out of the six selected students, only one student showed progress in his essay writing when using the graphic organizers. This student was considered an average writer. His baseline essays were a level 3 and a level 4, according to the rubric. When using the graphic organizers, the student's scores increased to a 5 and 6 for the remainder

of essays. When interviewed, this student claimed that the organization of the graphic organizers, particularly the “Graphic Organizer for 5-paragraph Essay,” is what helped him to improve his essay writing. Without the graphic organizers, the student had difficulty remembering to include topic sentences and to add enough detail sentences.

Past experiences with using graphic organizers

Two surveys, as well as interviews, were administered. Both surveys were given to the 6 chosen students, while only one of the surveys (See Appendix C) was given to the remainder of students.

The survey given to the whole group indicated that 44% of the 88 students had never used any kind of graphic organizer before this English class. 56% of students had used graphic organizers before, specifically in other past English classes, social studies, and math class. Only two of the six students claimed to have used graphic organizers before this class. One student used them in social studies and English class in seventh grade; the other student used them in resource room.

Students who chose to use the graphic organizers

Students were taught how to and required to use the graphic organizers for four of their essays in order to allow students to become familiar with them and to determine any progress made. For the last two essays, students were given the choice to use the graphic organizers. In the first set of essays where it was not mandatory to use the graphic organizers, 26% of the students did use them for prewriting. 76% of the students chose not to use them. In the second set of essays, only 8% of the students implemented the

graphic organizers. 92% chose not to use them. There were no obvious drops by nonusers or increases by users of graphic organizers. Graphic organizers didn't seem to play a significant role in changing essay scores.

When the six students were asked if they would choose to use a graphic organizer when given the choice, all of them responded, "Yes." But when they actually were given the choice, very few students used the graphic organizers. Out of the six particular students, three of them chose to use the "Graphic Organizer for 5-paragraph Essay" for the first choice essays. During the second set, none of the six students chose to use graphic organizers.

Feelings and attitudes toward graphic organizers

In general, two responses were given as reasons for using graphic organizers during prewriting. Most students believed that the purpose for using graphic organizers was "to help you organize" and "to help you write." There were many comments given about the use of graphic organizers, both positive and negative.

Many students stated that the "Graphic Organizer for 5-paragraph Essay" was well liked and helpful. Some statements included, "Graphic organizers keep me on topic; they keep everything organized and help me remember my ideas; they help me separate my paragraphs." Other positive comments were, "I love graphic organizers; those graphic organizers are helpful- I like them all; I like that fun graphic organizer ("Major Character Traits") with the person on it."

Some negative comments about graphic organizers came mostly from either the really high level writers who felt "constricted" by the graphic organizers or really low

level writers who were already frustrated with writing. Comments included, “It’s extra work and a waste of time; they confuse me; they make me lose my train of thought; graphic organizers frustrate me- my ideas grow as I write.” Other comments were, “I really hate these! I don’t need to prewrite or organize. I do better when I just write my essay” and “So we don’t have to do the graphic organizers for this essay? Yes!”

All six selected students said that the graphic organizers helped their writing of essays, though only one of the student’s scores proved this. They said that graphic organizers made their writing easier and more organized. All of the six students liked the “Graphic Organizer for 5-paragraph Essay.” Most of them liked the Venn diagram, though one of the high level students and one of the average students disliked the Venn diagram because they thought it was “hard.” Half of these students did not like the “Major Character Traits” graphic organizer because it was confusing. The students who disliked the “Major Character Traits” consisted of two low level students and one average level student.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of the use of graphic organizers on eighth graders' writing of essays and to explore students' attitudes toward those graphic organizers.

Conclusions

The results of this study into the effect of graphic organizers on eighth graders' writing of essays did not match what the researcher found in much of the research on graphic organizers. Although 14% of students did improve their essay writing when using graphic organizers, 86% did not show any type of progress. Based on the research, the percentage of students who improved their essay writing was expected to be much higher.

There were many factors that could have hindered students' progress. Although the researcher discussed and modeled the uses of all graphic organizers, some students still seemed confused about how to use them. More time needed to be dedicated to practicing using the organizers together as a class before assigning individual tasks to students. Because of students' confusion, the graphic organizers were used incorrectly at times. This may have led to the low percentage of students showing progress.

Some students even admitted to completing the graphic organizers after writing their essays because they didn't like prewriting or they just wanted to get the full credit to

fulfill the requirements. Many students said that graphic organizers were too much work and took too much time. Other reasons why progress may have been hindered was because many students didn't have enough time or didn't want to take that extra time to use the graphic organizers; students' motivation decreased and they stopped completing both essays and other homework assignments altogether; some students just misunderstood the directions of certain assignments, which decreased their scores. Also, some students didn't complete the graphic organizers even when they were required, which didn't allow the researcher to see their essay scores with and without graphic organizers.

To allow a possible increase in essay scores, more time would be needed, as well as an increase in the number of essays assigned both with required graphic organizers and with choice. I believe that changing some of these factors may alter the results and show more of an increase of students' essay scores.

Fourteen percent of students did show progress when using graphic organizers. Because these students used the graphic organizers correctly, their essays improved. This success supports an interest in continuing the use of graphic organizers. With this continuation, more students are likely to improve their prewriting, as well as their overall essay writing.

Implications for the Classroom

Graphic organizers assist many students, when used correctly and with effort. Teachers need to first explain what graphic organizers are, tell the purpose of using them, and show some examples. With adequate modeling from the teacher and practice within

the classroom, both as a whole class and as individuals, students are likely to improve in their use of graphic organizers. By introducing a variety of graphic organizers over time, students will become comfortable with them and most likely choose a few which work best for them.

In addition to adequate time for practice by students, there also seems to be a need for making the process of writing more important. Somewhere along the line, students learned that prewriting is not that important and can easily be overlooked. Teachers need to emphasize early on that the process of writing is just as important, if not more important, than the product of writing. If this is taught to students, then maybe negative attitudes toward using graphic organizers for prewriting will decrease, or even diminish.

In English class, graphic organizers may be used with a variety of writing tasks: poetry, narrative writing, expository writing, descriptive writing, and persuasive writing. But they shouldn't just be limited to English class. They can and should be implemented in some or all of the content areas.

Every student learns differently. Because many students are strong visual learners, graphic organizers are an effective method to introduce, review, and see relationships within a variety of topics and subjects. When used correctly and often, graphic organizers can be a powerful strategy for students of all ages and abilities.

Implications for Future Research

There is a great deal of research on graphic organizers and their positive effects on students. Although this study showed some positive results, they weren't as

impressive as results of other studies with graphic organizers. To better determine the effects of graphic organizers on students, more research is needed.

More studies need to be done that explore the connection between filling graphic organizers in during and after reading and choosing graphic organizers for writing. More studies should also be done at various grade levels. A great deal of the research is centered on elementary students; there needs to be more of a focus on both middle school students and high school students when using graphic organizers for writing.

Although graphic organizers are supposed to visually assist students in their writing, is it possible that some students are limited by them? Because all students learn differently, it may be possible that graphic organizers have a detrimental effect on certain students. If this is true, then alternative methods may need to be made available to those students.

For further study, some changes should be noted. First of all, a larger sample size can always be incorporated. This study was spanned over 3.5 months, but may show more progress if done over the entire year with more essays and graphic organizers assigned. There should also be more time spent on introducing, explaining, and practicing graphic organizers. This would be especially helpful to the lower level students who may have difficulty understanding how graphic organizers work. Overall, there is still a great deal of research and studies that need to be done to further investigate the effects of graphic organizers and how to best prepare our students to derive maximum benefits from them.

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Appendices

English 8
Date _____

Name _____
Period _____

Graphic Organizer for 5-paragraph Essay

Introduction

Thesis statement: _____

Body

Paragraph 1:

Topic sentence: _____

Example/Detail supporting topic sentence: _____

Paragraph 2:

Topic sentence: _____

Example/Detail supporting topic sentence: _____

Paragraph 3:

Topic sentence: _____

Example/Detail supporting topic sentence: _____

Conclusion

English 8
Date _____

Name _____
Period _____

Survey-entire class

- 1.) Have you ever used graphic organizers before this class? In what other class/es?
- 2.) How much time do you usually plan(rewrite) before writing an essay?
- 3.) How do you feel about using graphic organizers? Why?
- 4.) Do graphic organizers used for prewriting in English help you organize your essays better?
Why or why not?
- 5.) If you had the choice to use a graphic organizer before writing your essay, would you use one? Why or why not?
- 6.) Out of the three graphic organizers we used in English class this year so far, which one do you like best and why? (5-paragraph essay writing, Venn diagram, or Major Character Traits)
- 7.) What other prewriting methods have you used before?(ex. outlines, notes, etc.) Which prewriting method works best for you?

English 8
Date _____

Name _____
Period _____

Survey

- 1.) Do you consider yourself a poor, good, or fantastic writer?
- 2.) What is the purpose for using graphic organizers (why do you think teachers have students sometimes use them)?
- 3.) What is your experience with graphic organizers before doing them in our English class? Have you used them before? When? In what class?
- 4.) BEFORE using the 5-paragraph essay graphic organizer as a prewriting method in English class, how did you do on essay writing?
- 5.) AFTER using the 5-paragraph essay graphic organizer as a prewriting method, how were your essays? Were they more organized? Easier or harder to do? Did you get better grades on your essays?
- 6.) When assigned an essay, if you had a choice, would you choose to use the 5-paragraph graphic organizer to organize your ideas before writing your essay?

Writing Attitude Survey

Name _____ School _____ Grade _____

1. How would you feel writing a letter to the author of a book you read?



2. How would you feel if you wrote about something you have heard or seen?



3. How would you feel writing a letter to a store asking about something you might buy there?



4. How would you feel telling in writing why something happened?



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10. How would you feel if you had a job as a writer for a newspaper or magazine?



11. How would you feel about becoming an even better writer than you already are?



12. How would you feel about writing a story instead of doing homework?



13. How would you feel about writing a story instead of watching TV?



14. How would you feel writing about something you did in science?



20. How would you feel if your teacher asked you to go back and change some of your writing?



21. How would you feel if your classmates talked to you about making your writing better?



22. How would you feel writing an advertisement for something people can buy?



23. How would you feel keeping a journal for class?



24. How would you feel writing about things that have happened in your life?



**Writing Attitude Survey
Scoring sheet**

Student's name _____

Teacher _____

Grade _____

Administration date _____

Scoring guide

- | | | |
|---|--------|-------------------------|
| 4 | points | Very happy Garfield |
| 3 | points | Somewhat happy Garfield |
| 2 | points | Somewhat upset Garfield |
| 1 | point | Very upset Garfield |

Item scores:

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 15. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 16. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 17. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 18. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 19. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 20. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 21. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 22. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 23. _____ |
| 10. _____ | 24. _____ |
| 11. _____ | 25. _____ |
| 12. _____ | 26. _____ |
| 13. _____ | 27. _____ |
| 14. _____ | 28. _____ |

Full scale raw score: _____

Percentile rank: _____

Appendix L

Holistic Scoring Guide for Writing (Rubric)

Score of 6: Superior (91-100)

- *Addresses the question/topic fully and explores the issues thoughtfully
- *Shows a great deal of depth, fullness, and complexity of thought
- *Demonstrates clear, focused, unified, and coherent organization
- *Is fully developed and detailed
- *Evidences superior control and variety of mechanics and grammar, as well as transition; may have a few minor flaws

Score of 5: Strong (81-90)

- *Clearly addresses the question/topic and explores the issues
- *Shows some depth and complexity of thought
- *Is effectively organized
- *Is well developed, with supporting detail
- *Demonstrates control and variety of mechanics and grammar, as well as transition; may have a few flaws

Score of 4: Competent (71-80)

- *Adequately addresses the question/topic and explores the issues
- *Shows clarity of thought, but may lack complexity and depth
- *Is organized
- *Is adequately developed, with some detail
- *Demonstrates competent writing (although some grammatical or mechanical errors may occur, they aren't serious); may have some flaws

Score of 3: Weak (61-70)

- *May distort or neglect parts of the question/topic
- *May be simplistic or stereotyped in thought
- *May demonstrate problems in organization
- *May have generalizations without supporting detail or detail without generalizations; may be undeveloped
- *May show patterns of flaws in language, mechanics, or grammar

Score of 2: Inadequate (51-60)

- *Demonstrates *serious* inadequacy in one or more of the areas specified for the 3 paper

Score of 1: Incompetent (50 or lower)

- *Fails in its attempt to discuss the topic
- *May be deliberately off-topic (on purpose)
- *Is so incompletely developed as to suggest or demonstrate incompetence
- *Is wholly incompetent mechanically